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General and complete disarmament: promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation

Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 7 of its resolution 57/63, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on the issue of the promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation and to submit a report containing that information to the Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

2. Pursuant to that request, on 28 February 2003, a note verbale was sent to Member States inviting them to provide information on the subject. The replies received are reproduced in section II below. Additional replies received will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Replies received from Governments

Bolivia

[Original: Spanish]
[17 June 2003]

Bolivia, aware and supportive of the United Nations goal of maintaining international peace and security, is willing to take joint action to prevent and eliminate critical situations which pose a threat to peace.

The problems which lead to the break-up of State security are always complex and of universal concern and these characteristics will guide joint and solidary efforts to resolve them.

Agreements are an important tool, provided that their negotiation is not preceded by discrimination, in view of the complementarity that exists in bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral relations in the areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms trafficking.

Cooperation and international consultations with a view to resolving disputes by peaceful means, on the basis of dialogue and the strengthening of confidence-building measures, are essential tools for rapprochement and friendship between nations.

Bolivia reaffirms the indispensable value of multilateral diplomacy and recognizes it as a means of carrying forward the multiple negotiations on arms regulation and disarmament.

Threats must be prevented and eliminated, disputes must be resolved and the breakdown of world peace must be halted; the responsibility of lifting the dark shadow eclipsing international peace and security must be shared by the nations of the world through multilateralism.

Jordan

[Original: Arabic]
[1 July 2003]

1. Jordan supports the continuation of all international and regional efforts to promote multilateralism in disarmament and non-proliferation and urges the adoption of measures and procedures to remove prohibited weapons from circulation and dispose of them, and to concentrate on economic development and promote peace under the auspices of the United Nations. Jordan also affirms that a political will and a sincere commitment by all parties involved are necessary in order to achieve peace and stability in the world, as a guarantee of lasting and comprehensive peace.

2. The phenomenon of instability resulting from conflicts in the Middle East region calls for intensive cooperation and the adoption of transparent and comprehensive regional and international measures among all States of the region. In recent decades, Jordan has adopted clear policies that have defined its position with respect to disarmament, thereby underlining its support for all initiatives and efforts in that field in the various national, regional and international forums. Jordan considers that the question of disarmament cannot be addressed as an isolated issue or as one to be handled by individual States; the situation will become increasingly dangerous unless it is addressed through serious and effective regional and international efforts to achieve disarmament and strengthen the concept of multilateralism.

3. In the field of strengthening multilateralism in disarmament and non-proliferation, Jordan has ratified all the international conventions and treaties related to weapons of mass destruction, the most important of which are as follows:

(a) Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT);

(b) Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT);

(c) Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (PWC);

(d) Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC);

(e) Jordan supports all initiatives aimed at the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

4. In that context, Jordan is making diligent efforts to make the Middle East region a zone free of weapons of mass destruction through its effective participation in the technical committee endorsed by the Arab ministers for foreign affairs at their one hundred and first session to prepare a project to make the Middle East region a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. Jordan's ratification of the conventions and treaties on weapons of mass destruction and its active and positive role in the organizations established for that purpose are clear evidence of Jordan's concern for and commitment to international instruments to strengthen security, peace and stability throughout the world.

5. Jordan's position with respect to the attainment of that objective can be summarized as follows:

(a) Encouraging the elimination of the nuclear threat from the Middle East region and commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and to making the region free of all weapons of mass destruction;

(b) Proposing practical measures to reduce tension, build confidence and control the arms race in the region in all its forms under the auspices of the United Nations;

(c) Accession by all States of the region to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and placing all nuclear installations in the region under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency;

(d) Strengthening intelligence cooperation and confidence-building measures between the States of the Middle East region and the arms-exporting States of the world;

(e) Refraining from any action involving violations of treaties or conventions, or of State sovereignty.

Mexico

[Original: Spanish]
[3 June 2003]

Disarmament is a priority of Mexican foreign policy in the multilateral arena. Historically, within the framework of the United Nations system and in regional bodies, Mexico has promoted multilateral action designed to achieve general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

Mexico is playing its part in the collective endeavour to address threats to international peace and security and, in that regard, accords particular importance to the role of disarmament and non-proliferation. Mexico's position and activities with regard to disarmament are in conformity with its foreign policy principle "advancement of international peace and security", laid down in article 89, subparagraph X of its Political Constitution.

In its efforts to promote multilateralism in the area of disarmament, Mexico assigns a central role to the United Nations. Mexico therefore supports the holding of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Mexico considers that multilateralism is the basic principle underlying the resolution of issues of concern to the international community and the most effective means of doing so. It is also the condition sine qua non for achieving progress in the negotiations in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation. However, Mexico recognizes the complementary relationship between bilateral and plurilateral negotiations on the one hand, and multilateral negotiations on the other.

Verification of international agreements plays a pivotal role in the promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. The multilateral instruments relating to disarmament and arms control must be accompanied by non-discriminatory verification mechanisms designed in such a way that, while encouraging ongoing consultations and cooperation between parties to resolve disputes and facilitating compliance with obligations, they discourage recourse to unilateral measures.

Mexico supports the implementation of the recommendations contained in the United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education[1], submitted by the Secretary-General on 9 October 2002, which is, in itself, a significant agreement and the product of multilateral efforts.

Senegal

[Original: French]
[9 June 2003]

Senegal supports multilateral cooperation with a view to the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security and endorses the principles governing disarmament and arms control. Senegal considers that transparency in armaments positively reinforces non-proliferation at the international level, since the transmission of military information increases confidence, predictability, moderation and thus stability.

Transparency may serve as a basis for arms limitation and verifiable reduction at the subregional, regional and global levels. In that respect, Senegal affirms its commitment to disarmament.

Measures to ensure the security of electronic communications are required in the area of information exchanges, particularly with respect to the flow of arms. Such information must be confidential.

Consequently, it must be protected by means of a number of measures, namely:

- Ensuring the security of hardware, software and computer processing through the implementation of appropriate technical measures;
- Ensuring the security of information exchange processes through special, detailed regulations.

The specifically environmental aspect involves the degradation of and assaults on nature caused by the use of nuclear, bacteriological, chemical and radiological weapons and anti-personnel mines.

Senegal confirms its ongoing concern over protecting and conserving the environment in order to promote sustainable peace and development.

In that connection, Senegal supports the planned creation of a United Nations mine-action fund, which would be financed by a tax on the manufacture and production of weapons and weapons systems.

Moreover, the observance of standards relating to the implementation of disarmament agreements is linked with the observance of rules to which a number of States have voluntarily subscribed. Global disarmament cannot be achieved without regional disarmament. Accordingly, the two processes must be conducted together in the interest of regional and international peace and security. Senegal has therefore ratified all the conventions on disarmament, notably the moratorium on small arms and light weapons, a review of which, from the standpoint of the implementation of agreements on disarmament, reveals a number of shortcomings.

[1] A/57/124.

The moratorium provides for the establishment of national commissions and for ensuring their effective operation and the provision of adequate human, material and financial resources. Awareness-raising, through public forums, has been carried out in collaboration with two organizations:

– Mouvement contre les armes légères en Afrique de l'ouest (MALAO);

– Cercles de réflexion du Sénégal (CERES).

Training has been carried out by means of workshops led by senior officers from the National Army and Gendarmerie, officials from the National Security Service and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, members of civil society, academics and members of the gunsmiths' association.

The national commission also provided technical assistance to MALAO by organizing, in Dakar, under the auspices of the non-governmental organization "Alert International", a meeting for civil society on the theme of small arms and light weapons.

Transparency as regards the legal arms trade requires the creation of at least two registers: one for State-owned weapons and another for weapons belonging to individuals who have obtained prior State authorization. In addition to achieving those objectives, the commission is responsible for obtaining exemptions for the import of State-owned weapons and for dealing with applications from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for the import of weapons destined for other countries.

The exchange of information, as provided for by the moratorium, may give a clear indication about the weapons owned by the ECOWAS countries. However, the real value of the exchange of information between the signatories to the moratorium is the desire for transparency and honesty which should guide all those involved. This is obviously not the case for all Senegal's neighbours, which obtain the bulk of their weapons from former Eastern bloc countries. It is common knowledge that all their transactions go undeclared; therefore the regulations are not implemented in a uniform fashion in all geographical areas.

The moratorium is particularly restrictive for Senegal, since its weapons come from a single source, namely, countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union. Senegal's suppliers always observe international regulations concerning weapons and ammunition.

It is necessary to overcome the delay in implementing the provisions of the moratorium and to supplement the associated measures, bearing in mind the following proposals:

1. At the national level, the commission should assess annual weapons and ammunition requirements on the basis of a joint request from the security forces and, at the same time, formulate an exemption which would be valid for one year and renewable. That procedure is easily justified in view of the situation of the army in Casamance.

Furthermore, an observer office, provided for by the moratorium, could be established in the subregion. That office would reduce the marked imbalance in the supply of weapons and ammunition and inspection certificates would be issued by ECOWAS agents.

2. At the subregional level (ECOWAS): the importance of monitoring all weapons and ammunition around Senegal is reason enough for ECOWAS to draw up a moratorium on small arms and light weapons with the countries which are not members of ECOWAS but are Senegal's neighbours. That action would assuage certain obvious concerns regarding rebel movements in the subregion.

Respect for the environment means that Senegal must demine some areas of the national territory. In that regard, consideration could be given to creating a United Nations fund which would be financed from a tax on the manufacture and production of weapons and weapons systems.

In the context of building States' capacity to identify means of ensuring, in a viable manner, the traceability of weapons, a support and assistance programme for electronic communications could be contemplated. In preparation for that option, preliminary personnel training would be undertaken before the actual provision of information technology equipment.

The objectives would therefore be to eliminate delays in the implementation of all the provisions of the moratorium, to bring about internal and external improvements which would take into account Senegal's specific situation in relation to the rebellion in Casamance and, finally, to establish a United Nations mine-action fund and provide it with adequate resources generated from the tax on weapons and weapons systems.